



NEWS RELEASE

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland

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Contacts: Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor
307-745-2400
Misty Hays, Deputy District Ranger
307-358-7102

Prairie Dog Management Strategy decided

(Laramie, Wyo.) Nov. 12, 2009 - - After four years of collaborative efforts with environmental groups, ranchers, the public and wildlife managers, the Forest Service has made a decision on a strategy to conserve habitat and manage prairie dog populations on the Thunder Basin National Grassland in Wyoming.

“Local collaboration is critical. This strategy will be successful because it has the support of groups and individuals who are involved in the future of prairie dogs and species associated with their colonies, on both public and private land,” said Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland.

“It’s to the benefit of all that we continue to work cooperatively on this. It was quite an undertaking. The Forest Service and other groups worked really hard,” said Betty Pellatz, Chairwoman of the Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association.

Alternative 5 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement was selected by Peterson. The Record of Decision is at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/forestplans/in_progress.

“This Alternative provides for the conservation of black-tailed prairie dogs and their habitat, addresses concerns about prairie dog encroachment on private lands adjacent to the Grassland, and facilitates future recovery of endangered black-footed ferrets,” Peterson said. Prairie dogs are the main diet for black-footed ferrets. The management strategy also maintains and enhances the viability of many other native wildlife species on the Grassland, including fox, hawks, owls and other birds.

Prairie dog habitat on public lands will be enhanced through the use of management tools to help conserve prairie dogs recovering from sylvatic plague and controlled through the use of several management tools to prevent their spread to private lands where they compete with livestock for forage. The plan allows the use of poison if there is a public safety risk (because of disease) or damage to private and public facilities, such as cemeteries, and in some situations when other methods of control are not effective.

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***Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Thunder Basin National Grassland
2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, Wyoming 82070
<http://www.fs.fed.us/mrnf/news.htm>***